



FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER



First Covenant Church
Virginia, Minnesota
741-7117

www.firstcovenantvirginia.org

Volume XLIII - Number 6
June 2019



PASTOR'S PEN

Ascension Offers Us Hope and Opportunities

As we begin our summer season in June, we come to the end of the Easter season when we have been celebrating the resurrected Christ and how he offers us hope and opportunities. We start with the ascension of Christ returning back into heaven. Some people will talk about his coronation day when he not only he returns to heaven but sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty. There is no one greater but the Father, himself. In the days leading up to his crucifixion, Jesus makes a promise that when he returns back into heaven he will send a counselor, an advocate, a helper to us so that we might be empowered to be his new creation and be found faithful in his harvest. That day came 10 days after his ascension. We call it Pentecost. We will celebrate Pentecost on June 9th. What was given to us was the Holy Spirit to enable us to not only remember Christ's teachings but to be transformed into



his very image. The Holy Spirit is the power-house to further complete the mission of Christ on earth. Someday, our Lord will present the whole church, his bride, to his Father and our Father. The church, pure and holy, will eternally join the Triune God and reign with God from that day forward. A week after we celebrate Pentecost, we then commemorate God-In-Three-Persons on Trinity Sunday. It is out of these persons of God that we begin the long journey through Pentecost: given what God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has given us, how then shall we live?

We live each day to surrender our lives to the Lord and become totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit. And as one submits and lives obedient to the Lord, the Holy Spirit will direct the minds and hearts to understand and appropriate the truth of living the Christ-life, both inwardly and outwardly. A walk with God begins to be fashioned and understood as a life journey; never to be done alone, but in the company of other believers. We are the "one another's" Paul speaks about in his letters to the church.

Over the course of the summer, may you have the opportunity to consider your walk with the Lord. How goes your walk with God? What parts of it do you understand and know and what parts of it are still a mystery to you? These are questions we must all seek to address if we are to continue the journey into Christ. Allow the Scriptures to guide your understanding and wisdom as you ponder the Christ living in you. This summer, beginning June 30th, we will walk through the last three chapters of Ephesians. (Last summer, we worked through the first 3 chapters of Ephesians.) Allow these texts to speak into your heart as to how you are to walk inwardly and outwardly the life of Christ.

God desires that you shine like the Son! His full plan has been gifted to you to receive. What is this plan but to repent from of a sinful, self-centered life in order to journey with purity of heart, in loving, knowing, serving, and enjoying God and others.

Christ in you, the hope of glory!

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH PURPOSE STATEMENT

**The mission of First Covenant Church is
to worship God,
equip people to live in faith,
share God's love,
and serve the community around us.**

SERVING CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

Ushers:

Jun. 2—Roger & Gail Johnston
Jun. 9—Shirley Koski & Darlene Reindahl
Jun. 16—Roger & Judy Linden
Jun. 23—Steve & Linda Skogman
Jun. 30—Mike & Kathy Hannay

Sound Technicians:

Jun. 2—Roger Johnston
Jun. 9—Mike Hannay
Jun. 16—Roger Johnston
Jun. 23—Mike Hannay
Jun. 30—Roger Johnston

Church Caretakers for the week of . . .

Jun. 3—Brian & Julie Hill
Jun. 10—Wayne & Bernie Christiansen
& Audrey Branstrom
Jun. 17—Russ & Stephanie Carlson
Jun. 24—Mike & Kathy Hannay
Jul. 1—Roger & Judy Linden

Lawn-mowing for the week of . . .

Jun. 3—Hill Family
Jun. 10—Wayne Christiansen
Jun. 17—Roger Linden
Jun. 24—Steve Skogman
Jul. 1—Ken Pogorelec

Treats for Fire Department

June 9-15—Gail Johnston
June 23-29—Jean Pajunen

Treats for Bill's House in June: Linda Pogorelec

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 4/1/189-4/30/19

Checking account balance as Apr.. 1st: **\$27,645.12**

General Fund income for current period: **\$6321.50**

Other income: **\$81.00**

Steam Conversion Donations: **\$1600.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$8229.06**

Checking account balance as of Apr.. 30th:

\$27,607.56

MISSION EVENT

Together with the other Covenant churches in the Lake Superior District, our church has taken on partial support of Julio and Katie Isaza, Covenant missionaries to Colombia, following the retirement of Keith and Florence Gustafson, missionaries to Congo. We will have a chance to get acquainted with the Isazas at a barbecue at 4:30 on Saturday, June 22nd, at Biwabik Covenant. The Biwabik church will provide the meat for the meal, and we are asked to provide bars for dessert. There will be a sheet on the table downstairs for you to sign up to bring bars. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

NURSING HOME SERVICE

Our church is responsible for the service at St. Michael's Health Care Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 30th. It would be good to have some of our church family there to help with the singing and to share a friendly word with the residents.

ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

Our annual church picnic will be held on Sunday, July 14th, at the former gun club building on the west shore of Silver Lake.

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES

We had a good turnout for our annual salad supper. We were able to send \$375.78 to the women of Congo. We encourage you to continue to collect aluminum cans this summer as every little bit counts up.

Our first Ladies Lunch of the summer will be held at noon at Jue's on Tuesday, June 4th.

AALOTTAR IN CONCERT

Aallotar, the international recognized duo of violinist/vocalist Finnish-American Sara Pajunen and Finnish accordionist Teija Niku, will perform in concert at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Virginia. The program will feature traditional and modern folk music in Finnish and English.

Since its formation in 2013, Aalottar has made numerous appearances in the United States and leading European festivals. The concert is hosted by Finnish Americans and Friends. There is a suggested donation of \$10. Coffee and refreshments will follow the concert.

COVENANT KIDS CONGO

We have big news! A new bank with multiple branches will be opening up in Gemena, DR Congo, as soon as later this year, with plans to lend to about 15,000 people over three years.

It will be **the first time** that thousands of people in Gemena, including the savings groups started through the Covenant Kids Congo partnership, will have access to a bank. While a few commercial banks and other financial services are present, these institutions tend to serve only a fraction of the population, and some services may charge very high interest. This new bank with VisionFund DRC will be the first of its kind in Gemena to operate as a microfinance institution to serve clients who are farmers and small business owners.

The new bank in Gemena has been made possible through the amazing strides in community development over the past six years, supported by the Covenant Kids Congo partnership between World Vision, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and local churches including the Covenant Church of Congo (CEUM). VisionFund International, which is part of World Vision, is the world's largest Christian microfinance network, and the majority of its clients live in rural areas where there's little access to financial services. Also in partnership with VisionFund is Opportunity International, which is a part-owner of VisionFund DRC. Opportunity International has led the way in banking for under-resourced communities in

DR Congo and works internationally to begin these kinds of services in the majority world.

Among the bank's clients will be entrepreneurs in local savings groups. There are about **180 savings groups** in Gemena with 9,315 members total, of whom 90% are women. These savings groups typically store their funds in a wooden cash box with a padlock. Now, savings groups will have access to a secure bank. The bank will also provide microfinance loans for entrepreneurs to start small businesses and increase their income.

The Gemena bank will be pursuing the following three-year goals:

- Lend to approximately 15,000 people
- Lend to 75% women clients
- Impact about 50,000 children through these families.

This microfinance bank will be a **significant advancement for economic development in this region**. Covenant Kids Congo celebrates that this bank will be launching thanks to local community development progress and your commitment to this partnership! Thank you so much for walking with our friends in Gemena, DR Congo.

COVENANT TRUST COMPANY

Tips to take (some of) stress out of tax season:

Now that the 2018 tax season is behind you, it's a good idea to review your situation and make note of any changes you may have experienced under the new tax rules. Below are some areas you should look at.

Did the adjusted tax brackets, the increase in standard deduction amount, and the elimination of personal exemptions have more of an impact than you expected? If you answer yes to any of the above or below questions or don't fully know how you were impacted, take the opportunity to review your situation to see if there is any action that you can take to positively impact your tax situation in the next year.

Did you owe money to the government for the tax year 2018? If yes, did you have to pay a penalty for underpayment? If yes, check to see if you are having

the appropriate amount withheld from your paycheck or your pension, annuity, or IRA distribution checks. Make any adjustments so you don't owe or have to pay the penalty for underpayment. If you would prefer not to have withholding, you can make quarterly estimated payments into the IRS instead. The goal is to have enough on deposit with the IRS so that you do not get penalized for underpayment.

Did you get a large refund from the IRS? If so, check to see if you are having *too much* withheld from your check. There is no reason to deposit more with the IRS than you need to.

Has there been a major event in your life, like a marriage, or a new baby, or the death of a spouse? These life-changing events may have an impact on your tax situation, so it is important to review your withholding or estimated tax payments with your tax preparer.

Did your IRA required minimum distribution put you into a higher tax bracket? If you are over 70 ½, you can have your IRA trustee/custodian make your charitable gifts directly to the charities from your IRA (up to \$100,000). The distribution would not be considered as taxable income to you and may keep you in a lower bracket.

Did you receive 1099s from too many institutions? Consider consolidating some of your accounts into one financial institution such as Covenant Trust Company. This could help simplify and streamline your collection of tax statements. For help, talk to:

Steve Allison

218-297-7701

ssrallison@covenanttrust.com

THANK YOU NOTES

Greetings to You All:

It is with extreme joy that I received your support and donation for devotional books for law enforcement couples. I was down to our last three books, and I am finding them to be most useful. So thank you. We did have five couples from our area who attended the retreat, which by the way was most positive.

Thank you all again,
Kevin Norton, Chaplain

1st Covenant Family:

Thank you for the kinds words in the card you sent and also how you welcomed us into your church for pasty making. We loved that, and Brent even put some crust in our freezer to make pies! Now it's up to me! We will be okay, and Brent is in a better place.

Love,
Stacy

Hello Covenant Church,

We want to thank your group for being such good patrons of our building doing a great job cleaning up after making pasties. Thanks also to Darrel for sharpening the knives on the dicer, which needed to be done. We would also like to thank your church for providing for the needs within your community. We know the cost of heating system is costly, so we are making a donation toward that cost.

Kevin Roen, Secretary
Eveleth Masonic Lodge #239

AMONG US

We extend our Christian sympathy to **Bill King** and family on the death of his son Tim on May 27th.

Pastor Roger and Marjean's son Jonathan will graduate from anesthesiology residency on June 8. This past year he was one of the anesthesiology chief residents. He will begin working as an anesthesiologist at Unity Hospital in Rochester, New York, in July and take part one of the anesthesiology board certification test in July. His address is: 20 Deland Park A, Fairport, NY 14450

Roger and Gail's son Dan and daughter-in-law Courtney have hosted a young lady from Italy this past school year. Gaia will be graduating from Denfeld High School in Duluth on June 6 and flies back home on June 11. It had been a wonderful year getting to know her. She has been like a granddaughter for Gail and Roger. They will miss her.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS



Bernie Christiansen	8th
Lloyd Stanaway	13th
Mike Hannay	20th
Brian Hill	29th

BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Items for the July calendar need to be e-mailed or in the church office by Sunday, June 16th. Weekly bulletin items must be e-mailed or brought to the church office by 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday. E-mailed items need to have either “calendar” or “bulletin” in the subject line.

Items for the July issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, June 23rd. Items may be submitted by e-mail to [**wbchris@q.com**](mailto:wbchris@q.com). Remember that we are always looking for news of interest for the “Among Us” column.